I Count Your Heartbeats Before You Sleep

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I Count Your Heartbeats Before You Sleep

by reluctantlyryn

Summary

Shane and Ilya have a 6 year-old daughter and are trying their best to let her know how loved she is.

Notes

Hello!! My first heated rivalry fic yay!

There's no set procurement for their child here so it can be whatever you like-- whether that be adoption, surrogacy, or Shane actually being pregnant-- the world's ya oysta.

No one tell my parents that I'm basing gay hockey fanfiction off of them and my childhood.

See the end of the work for more notes

Shane Hollander crawled into bed, skin flushed and hair still wet from his shower. He kissed his husband's bare shoulder sensually, an invitation. But, clearly, Ilya's Pinterest scrolling was more important.

"Not now, dusha moya," He said softly. "I still haven't decided what hairstyle we're doing tomorrow."

All the fondness in Shane's heart seeped into his smile. He grabbed his glasses off his nightstand and scooched closer to Ilya so he could see the screen. Images of kids (far less cute than their own, if you asked Shane) flashed by, their hair all different sorts of patterns of braids and pigtails and barrettes.

"Why do you spend so long on her hair on game days anyway?" Shane asked sincerely. "It just gets all messed up under her helmet as soon as she gets to the rink."

Ilya sighed and shrugged. His cheek puffed out as his lips slanted.

"It is fun for me." He finally said. "Is not so much about how the hair looks, or actually doing it. I get to spend time with Natasha, just us."

Shane hadn't thought of it like that. Usually, he would be in the gym while Ilya worked on little Nataly's hair. He'd meet them in the kitchen for breakfast and her thick, golden brown hair would be crafted into whatever elaborate style Ilya had decided to try that day. It always looked beautiful on his first attempt, too.

When Natasha didn't have practice or games, the styles became more adventurous. Pigtail buns that looked like bows, criss-crossy braids pulled together with colorful ribbons. There was a whole case in Natasha's bathroom that contained hundreds of fun clips and ties. Shane had likened it to an industrial toolbox.

"You should do those pigtails that look like bubbles." He suggested, pointing at a square on the screen.

Ilya hummed in consideration.

"Simple, but we could do dutch braids leading down to them so her hair will stay flat under the helmet."

Shane wasn't sure he knew what made a dutch braid different than any other but he kissed Ilya's cheek and turned off the iPad, trying to smoothly set it aside.

"I love how much you do for our daughter." Shane whispered against Ilya's mouth.

"Yes?" Ilya teased. "Tell me more."

"You're such a good dad. I always knew you would be, but *damn."* Shane said between kisses. Ilya squeezed at his hips.

“You *always* knew?” Ilya asked, his head tilting adorably.

“Well, yeah…” Shane blushed and ducked his head. “Do you remember that first All-Stars Game we played together? In Tampa?”

Ilya nodded as the corners of his lips turned up.

“You were playing with some of the kids in the hotel pool and I was sitting there thinking how good you are with them, wondered if you’d ever want some.”

Ilya kissed him long and lovingly.

“You are a fucking sap, Hollander.”

Shane scoffed and rolled onto his back.

“Fuck off.”

“Nooo,” Ilya whined, following him to straddle his hips. “It is true.”

He pulled Shane’s glasses off and set them on the end table.

“We had not even admitted our love and you were thinking of having my children.” Ilya said with awe.

Shane rolled his eyes and hooked his arms around Ilya’s neck to pull him closer.

“Maybe I was just thinking about you getting me pregnant.” He joked with a roll of his hips.

“Mmh,” Ilya hummed as his mouth attacked Shane’s neck. “Should we try for another right now?”

“You read my mind.”

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The next morning, after his workout, Shane ran up behind Natasha as she ate her breakfast at the kitchen island. She squealed as he wrapped his arms around her and kissed the side of her head.

“Good morning, zvezdochka!” He exclaimed while Ilya looked at the pair fondly.

“Daddy!” Natasha yelled in protest. “You’re sweaty! And you stink!”

Shane stepped back and feigned offense.

“She is right.” Ilya said as he handed Shane one of the protein shakes he’d been experimenting with making.

“Shunned by my own family.” Shane shook his head with a smile, then turned to Natasha. “Papa did good with your hair.”

“Mhm!” She nodded proudly. “I chose the colors.”

Shane inspected closer and saw that the rubber bands were blue and yellow, her team colors.

“Smart girl.”

Suddenly Anya jumped up on the stool next to Natasha and began nosing at her cheek. She was still pretty spry for getting up there in dog years, and she *loved* Natasha. Natasha giggled and, as with every time she laughed or smiled, Shane felt his heart grow impossibly fuller.

“I’m gonna go take a shower then we can finish getting you ready, capiche?”

“Ca-poosh.” Natasha responded and went back to eating her toast.

Shane smiled to himself as he made his way upstairs.

“Nataly! Anya cannot eat your pears for you!” He heard Ilya shout in the distance.

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Wrangling a six-year-old is difficult on the best of days, but wrangling a hockey playing six-year-old with ADHD was a whole other challenge.

“Ilya, she’s got like four of them. How can we not find a single child-sized stick!?”

“I don’t know, Shane!” Ilya yelled back as he threw a box into the garage wall.

“They have extras there right?” Shane said in desperation.

“Not good ones!”

“Found one!” Natasha’s little voice called from the door.

Shane and Ilya let out twin sighs of relief.

“I was using them for a blanket fort, they were still in the basement.” She said simply and casually, like they weren’t running late.

“Chudesnyy,” Ilya replied under his breath. “Into the car.”

Before Natasha was born, Ilya and Shane had worn themselves out searching for the safest car they could find. They eventually settled on a sensible SUV. Far different from Ilya's sports cars, of which he still had one, but that was for date nights and other special occasions.

Natasha haphazardly threw her stick and helmet into the second row before crawling into her booster seat.

"Okay," Shane started, as he organized the pile of gear from the other side. He went through the mental list he'd checked off in the exact same order since he was Natasha's age. "We're good! Let's go."

Ilya reached for Shane's hand as they pulled onto the main roads.

"Hey. It is okay. We will still be five minutes early."

Shane let out a breath, not realizing he had been holding it. He brought Ilya's hand to his mouth and placed a grateful kiss on the back.

He looked back at Natasha who wasn't worried in the slightest. She hummed to herself and kicked her legs softly as she gazed out the window. She wasn't the most quiet kid but she would often get stuck in her head. At their last parent/teacher conference, her teacher had said she had a big imagination.

As Ilya had surmised, they arrived at the rink early. Plenty of time to help Natasha into her gear and set her off for warmups on the ice.

"I hope she actually likes this." Ilya said suddenly as they watched first-graders glide and stumble across the ice.

Shane panicked.

"Did she say something?"

"No." Ilya shifted in his seat. "I just don't want her to think is her only option."

Shane sat and thought for a moment. They'd put her on the ice as soon as she could stand, they watched hockey all the time at home, obviously it was a big part of their lives. But maybe too big?

"Oh my god. Are we just raising a hockey clone? What if she thinks she can't tell us she hates it because it's important to us? We've got to get her in a book club, or like a choir, or something."

"Shane," Ilya placed a warm hand on his knee, immediately grounding him. "You are spiraling."

"Sorry."

"We can talk to her at home. I just– I worry she thinks she *needs* to play."

“Yeah.” Shane agreed. He leaned into his husband’s arm and stayed mostly silent for the rest of the game.

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Natasha’s team had won, of course, so the Hollander-Rozanov’s extended an ice cream invitation to the rest of the kids and their families.

In the small parlor, Shane sat with Ilya’s arm around him, sharing a chocolate-vanilla cup. Shane still shivered when Ilya touched him in public, even all these years later. He’d come to terms with being public with Ilya, of course. But, they had still spent more time hiding than not, and old habits die hard.

They watched in comfortable silence as Natasha talked with her friends. She gesticulated wildly, always showing emotion with her whole body. Her hair was messy as could be: flyaways galore, and she’d definitely lost some of the rubber bands. But, it was perfect.

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That evening, Shane stood just outside the bathroom door as Ilya brushed Natasha’s hair.

“Do you like hockey?” Ilya asked hesitantly, and in Russian.

“Da.” Natasha seemed content as she responded.

“I do not want you to feel forced into it. It should be your decision. We will support you, whatever you want.”

“Okay.” She responded in English, unphased. “Ellie plays hockey though.”

Ilya let out a small laugh.

“You could still see Ellie, even if you didn’t play hockey– Daddy and I are friends with her moms. You could play a different sport, if you want. Or, you could do um… musical theatre?”

“I like hockey.” Natasha said defiantly, like the idea of doing anything else was ridiculous.

“Alright,” Ilya said. “We stick with hockey.”

“Yay!” Shane could picture her little close-mouthed smile and a matching one made its way to his face. “Can I go play in my room now?”

“Yes, moya malyshka, go.” Ilya whispered, followed by the tell-tale *mwah* of a kiss being placed to the crown of Natasha’s head.

“Hi daddy!” Natasha stopped to give Shane a quick hug before continuing to run to her room.

“Walking feet!” He tried to call out, to no avail.

“Eavesdropping, Hollander?” Ilya said, abruptly appearing at Shane’s side and making him jump.

“Gah! Hi, no, yeah, a little, maybe.” He stuttered out.

Ilya smiled and leaned in to rest his forehead against Shane’s.

“You are bad liar.”

“Hush.” Shane kissed Ilya’s nose playfully and walked away.

“She is doing good.” Ilya continued as they sat down on the couch together. Shane automatically pulled a blanket over their laps and curled into Ilya’s side. “If some day she decides she’s done with hockey, she knows we will not be mad.”

“Yeah.” Shane said pensively. “Did you ever want to quit?”

“Yes.” Ilya quickly answered. “I love my job. It brought me you, all of this, I am good at it. But…”

“You always wonder ‘what if?’ right?”

“Yes.” Ilya buried his face in Shane’s hair. “I didn’t have the option.”

“What would you have done instead, do you think?”

Ilya made a noncommittal noise and went silent.

“I think I would have liked to be a dancer.” He eventually said. “I used to dance with my mom. She would put my feet on top of hers and twirl us around the living room.”

Shane smiled at the mental image.

“You never take me dancing.” He pouted.

“Shane,” Ilya began, sounding like he was desperately trying to hold in a laugh. “You are *terrible* dancer.” He finally let the laugh burst out.

“Shut uuup.” Shane whined.

“You are so good with your hips in bed,” Ilya said, his mouth close to Shane’s face, making him blush. “But we put you in a club and boom! Stiff as a board!”

“I’ll show you stiff as a board.” Shane growled playfully as he wrestled Ilya onto his back.

“Oh no, whatever will I do?”

As soon as Shane leaned down and connected their lips, there was a shout from upstairs.

“Papa!!! Daddy!!!”

It didn’t sound urgent so Ilya took a moment to throw his head back with a groan.

“You’re insatiable.” Shane teased with a punch to his chest.

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Their night was spent playing dolls with Natasha (an eclectic mix of barbies and superhero toys, the latter being a birthday present from Uncle Wyatt), eating dinner (a delicious vegetarian curry Shane had wanted to try), watching a movie (Natasha’s choice that night was The Little Mermaid, Ilya won’t admit it but Shane knows he cried), and putting Natasha to bed.

As Shane brushed his teeth next to Ilya, he couldn’t help the warmth that bloomed in his chest. The fact that he got to have all this still took him by surprise.

“I love you.” He said when they curled around each other in bed.

“I know.” Ilya responded plainly, causing Shane to shoot him a glare.

“I love you too, Shane.” He corrected, through a smug grin.

“You know,” Shane started hesitantly. “About what you said earlier, if you wanted to quit hockey, retire early… I’d support you. You know that right?”

Ilya kissed his forehead.

“I do. I am not quitting hockey though.”

“I just want to make sure *you* enjoy it too.”

“Shane, just because I do not love hockey as much as you does not mean I do not love it.”

“I know…” Shane squirmed in Ilya’s hold.

“Plus I get to work with my husband, is good deal.”

Shane angled his head to give Ilya a proper kiss.

“Yeah that part is pretty cool, I guess.” He murmured against his lips.

“Besides, if I were to retire early I’d just stay home with Natasha. I like being a father most of all.”

Every time Shane thought he couldn’t be more in love with Ilya, he’d go and say something like that to make him fall in love all over again.

“I love parenting with you. I love our daughter, she’s turning out so good.”

“So good.” Ilya echoed.

End Notes

Russian translations:
Dusha moya- My soul
Zvezdochka- Little star
Chudesnyy- Wonderful
Moya malyshka- My little one/my child (feminine)

Russian is my fourth language and I am nowhere near fluent so please let me know if any of these should be fixed.

Let me know if you'd like to see more of moya malen'kaya Natasha!

Say hey over on Twitter and make sure to follow me here if you want to keep up with my 12 Days of Spideytorch fics starting tomorrow!

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